

Worksession

Agenda Item #	10
Meeting Date	December 6, 2004
Prepared By	Suzanne Ludlow, Community & Government Liaison
Approved By	

Discussion Item	Discussion of the Montgomery College Facilities Master Plan
Background	<p>Montgomery College prepared a State-required Facilities Master Plan and submitted it to the State in January of this year. However, the Plan was not submitted to the Montgomery County Planning Board for review through its Mandatory Referral process, nor was it formally submitted to the Takoma Park City Council for review and comment. Information about the content of the Plan was shared with the City Council in February and at a presentation on November 22.</p> <p>City staff has reviewed the Plan and has a number of comments and recommendations (see attached Staff Report).</p>
Policy	The City Council is concerned with and takes positions on development affecting the City of Takoma Park.
Fiscal Impact	Unknown.
Attachments	Staff Report; Draft Resolution
Recommendation	Discuss; provide direction on resolution for action on December 13.
Special Consideration	The Mandatory Referral review of the proposed King Street Arts Center is tentatively scheduled to be heard in January before the Montgomery County Planning Board.

Staff Report on Montgomery College Facilities Master Plan

Summary

Montgomery College has prepared and adopted a Facilities Master Plan for its three-campus system, meeting the State of Maryland requirements for such a plan.

The Facilities Master Plan for the Takoma Park campus covers previously approved development in Takoma Park and Silver Spring—the completed Health Sciences Building in Silver Spring, the Student Services Building under construction in Takoma Park, and the pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks—as well as proposed new development and redevelopment in both Silver Spring and Takoma Park. The proposed King Street Arts Center has been submitted to the Montgomery County Planning Board for review through the Mandatory Referral process. Remaining aspects of the plan have been discussed with the community, but have not gone through a formal review process with either the Montgomery County Planning Board or the City of Takoma Park.

City staff recommends that a master plan for the Takoma Park campus be developed through a community process that will then be formally reviewed by the City of Takoma Park and Montgomery County Planning Board. The Facilities Master Plan represents a strong base of information for such a master plan, but staff has identified several areas of City and community concern that are not adequately addressed in that plan. In addition, staff recommends that commitments regarding the public planning and review processes be made by the College to allow all parties an understanding of what to expect as planning and implementation for the campus proceed over time.

It should be noted that the section of the Facilities Master Plan outlining proposed long-term development on the Takoma Park campus represents a strong commitment to the Takoma Park and Silver Spring communities by Montgomery College. In addition, the College has worked closely with adjacent residents in planning for the development that has occurred in the last three years. Because of the high level of communication, the Facilities Master Plan includes many aspects that reflect responsiveness to concerns of the nearby community, such as placing taller buildings and parking away from residential areas. The College has also agreed to working via local historic preservation review processes regarding campus properties in the Takoma Park Historic District.

A new master plan for the Takoma Park campus could address design details, process, and neighborhood compatibility in a way not addressed by the State-mandated Facilities Master Plan. Such a master plan would be prepared through a community process identifying areas of community concern and working to establish a community and college vision of the campus. In cases where it is too early to know design or usage specifics at this time, the process that the College, City and community would use to evaluate future buildings or uses would be outlined in the master plan. To ensure that the new institutional master plan and public review process has weight, legal agreements could be developed identifying those aspects for which commitments can be made.

Staff comments on aspects of the Facilities Master Plan follow:

Transportation

Features

The Facilities Master Plan proposes significant increases in the amount of built space on the Takoma Park side of the campus but also reduces by 36 the number of parking spaces on this side of the campus. The plan contains no information about the College's strategy for promoting the use of alternative modes of transportation. An overall transit usage rate of five percent among the College's student's, faculty, and staff is assumed.

Concerns

While the plan shows that the overall peak occupancy of the parking garage is 85% on the Takoma Park side of the campus, Montgomery College has advised City staff that the structure is full at times, especially during the first few weeks of each term. As student population increases, ensuring that traffic and parking do not overwhelm surrounding residential areas is critical.

Recommendations

- Development of Strategy to promote the use of public transit and alternative transportation, establishing realistic goals for increased transit usage by students, staff and facility.
- Submission of a pedestrian circulation plan illustrating how pedestrians will travel from key entry points such as the parking garage and bus stops to various destinations around the campus.
- Implementation of traffic calming measures at key intersections such as New York Avenue and Fenton Street, where there will be large numbers of students crossing to get to the parking garage or the Student Services Center.
- Address the College's interest in locating utilities in the New York Avenue right of way and the opportunity this presents to create a pedestrian friendly corridor for the east side of the campus.

Zoning

Features

The Facilities Master Plan proposes significant increases to the overall building density on the Takoma Park side of the campus. The amount of lot coverage by buildings is proposed to increase on the Takoma Park campus, and in general, buildings are proposed to be taller than the current ones on the site. The lot coverage in the plan exceeds the zoning limits that would be imposed on a private developer. The computer center located in the King Street Arts Center will serve the entire Montgomery College system.

Concerns

While creative design may help ameliorate the effects of the increased building area, the issues of design, lot coverage, and massing need to be discussed. Even if the massing, design, and environmental impacts are addressed, there are concerns about the overall impacts to the surrounding neighborhood.

Requested Modifications

- Identify, and consider relocation of, uses that do not need to be on the small Takoma Park campus to reduce the density of development and use on the east side of the campus.

Design

Features

The Facilities Master Plan includes an enhanced central green on the east side of the campus that extends from the Student Services Center to the tennis courts that are adjacent to the Commons building.

Requested Modifications

- Use the Facilities Master Plan as an opportunity to set new architectural and urban design standards that can be applied to the rest of the campus as it is redeveloped. Issues that should be addressed through these standards include building materials, lighting, pedestrian facilities, and the transition between the campus and residential neighborhood.
- Consider moving the tennis courts to another location. This would create an opportunity to develop a campus green that more effectively connects the Commons building to the rest of the campus.
- Work more closely with the City of Takoma Park on sharing recreational/educational/arts facilities with Takoma Park residents. Design of these facilities should be done in a way that would allow for public use if those arrangements are made.
- Incorporate renovations to the parking garage on Fenton Street into the list of capital projects. Although these improvements are in the master plan, they are not on the capital improvements list.

Environment

Requested Modifications

- Incorporate the standards for meeting Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification on all new and renovated buildings.
- Apply similar standards to tree protection and replacement as is done throughout the rest of Takoma Park. Work with the City Arborist when construction activities are to take place on the portions of the campus that are in Takoma Park.

Stormwater

Requested Modifications

- Acknowledge in the Facilities Master Plan that the College needs to provide a stormwater concept plan for each building located in Takoma Park. The City has stormwater review authority for the portion of the Montgomery College campus within Takoma Park. The Facilities Master Plan assumes that little stormwater work will be required as the College will get an automatic waiver, although College officials acknowledge that statement was in error.

Introduced by:

DRAFT
RESOLUTION # 2004 -

Resolution Regarding Montgomery College Facilities Master Plan

WHEREAS, the City of Takoma Park has supported keeping the Takoma Park Campus of Montgomery College in Takoma Park, and renovating and expanding the campus, via Resolutions 1997-7, 1997-22 and 2001-25; and

WHEREAS, the College has worked well with the community in the development of plans for the relocation of Fenton Street and in the design of the Student Services Building; and

WHEREAS, the College has prepared a Facilities Master Plan that includes consideration of community concerns, especially in placing taller buildings along Fenton Street; and

WHEREAS, the Plan was adopted by the Board of Trustees and submitted to the State of Maryland before going through the Mandatory Referral process of the Montgomery County Planning Board and before being formally considered by the City Council; and

WHEREAS, the Plan does not address some of the transportation, design, zoning, and process concerns important to the City and the community; and

WHEREAS, a community planning process that identifies long term development concerns and goals, that results in an agreement that commits the College to the community and regulatory processes to be followed, and that results in an institutional master plan describing desirable use, massing, design, lot coverage, tree protection, and limits to parking and traffic impacts, and, where possible, commits the College to specifics regarding those plan elements, would advance the interests of the College, City and community.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Takoma Park requests that Montgomery College undertake a community planning process to develop an institutional master plan for the Takoma Park Campus to address long term development concerns identified by the City and the community; and that Montgomery College work with the City and the community to specify and commit to the public process to be used as the College's plans are refined and implemented.